

I Corinthians 11:23-34

Profaning The Lord's Table

The Church in Corinth was a struggling church. An area of real concern was in their practice and observance of the Lord's Table. Some in the church were attending the Lord's table for all the wrong reasons. There were those who thought more about the food they were eating, than the symbolism behind the food. Paul shows serious concern in I Corinthians 11 verse 34, "...if any man hunger, let him eat at home."

Paul wanted the church in Corinth to realize that The Lord's Supper is not a common feast. It is not designed as a place where a man may gratify his appetite. It is designed as a simple commemoration, and not as a feast.

Paul's remark was designed to correct erroneous views of the Lord's Supper, and to show the church that it was to be distinguished from the ordinary idea of a feast or festival.

The common view of the bread was causing the church to not discern the Lord's body. They were not discriminating between the bread which is used on this occasion of the Lord's Table, and common and ordinary food.

They did not make the proper distinction between this and common meals. It is evident that this was the leading offence of the Corinthians at the Lord's Table.

Albert Barnes writes, "They did not regard the bread which represented the body of Christ in a proper manner, but supposed it to be simply an historical commemoration of an event, such as they were in the habit of observing in honor of an idol or a hero by a public celebration.

They, therefore, did not "discern the Lord's body" in the sense intended here, who with a serious mind regard it as an institution appointed by the Lord Jesus to commemorate his death; and who distinguish thus between this and ordinary meals, and all festivals and feasts designed to commemorate other events."

Furthermore, the Corinthians neglected to examine themselves before observing the Lord's Table.

We read Paul's exhortation in verse 28, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

The church was to search and see if they had the proper qualifications to partake at the Lord's Table -- if they had knowledge to discern the Lord's body, if they had true repentance for their sins, true faith in the Lord Jesus, and a sincere desire to live the life of a Christian, and to be like the Son of God, and be saved by the merits of his precious blood.

Paul's word to the church was, "let everyone examine themselves, and see whether they have the right feelings of a communicant, and can approach the table in a proper manner."

The Corinthians were experts at examining others but not themselves. Let us call them "religious detectives". These are people who watch and point out other peoples' sins and faults, but are unable to see their own.

Clearly, the church in Corinth had lost sight of the true nature and purpose of the Lord's Table. They had become careless and carnal in their approach.

The problems in the church at Corinth should remind us of the importance of understanding why we eat the bread and drink the cup at the Lord's Table.

How are we approaching the Lord? What should we reflect on at the Lord's Table? What should we be thinking about today?

The title of my message is, *Profaning The Lord's Table*. The Corinthians were profaning the Lord's Table. We must not profane the Lord's Table.

What do I mean by the term profane? Profane in the Scripture refers to something that is made ordinary or common. The Scripture describes Esau as a *profane* man.

We read in Hebrews 12:16 "Lest there be any fornicator, or *profane* person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright."

In the case of Esau, he despised both the temporal and spiritual blessings associated with his birthright for a measly bowl of soup. He viewed his birthright as something ordinary or common but it wasn't. The birthright was suppose to be held in high esteem. It was a privileged position.

The opposite of profane is holy.

The fourth commandment teaches that we are to keep holy the Sabbath Day. We are not to profane it by making it a common or ordinary day like the other days of the week.

That is why our Lord Jesus Christ was so angry, and turned over the tables of the money changers in the temple because they were making God's House a place of merchandise, an ordinary or common place. But God's house is holy. It should be different from the world.

Like the Corinthians in the early church, we too can profane the Lord's Table, and forget what we are suppose to do and why we do it.

The Lord's Table gives us opportunity for spiritual growth and blessings if we approach it in the right attitude. What is the right attitude? How should we approach the Lord's Supper? What are some things that we can do to keep ourselves from profaning the Lord's Table?

Let me say first that we are to reflect upon:

1. The death of Jesus Christ (read verses 23-26a).

Most people forget death, and when dead, want to be forgotten. But Christ wants us to REMEMBER His death.

Why? Because everything we are centers in His death.

We must never forget, for His death is the gospel message.

We read in I Corinthians. 15:3-4 – Christ died.....and was buried. It was not our Lord's life, or His teachings, that will save sinners. It is His death. Rom. 5:9. Christ died for our sins; He became our substitute on the Cross. Isa. 53:6; I Peter 2:24

We should not only remember that He died, but also how He died. It was willingly and meekly.

Because He loved us He gave Himself over into the hands of wicked men. Rom. 5:8

Remembering is not simply recalling historical facts. Rather, it is an opportunity to have fellowship with the living Christ as we reach out in faith.

The bread and cup are the symbols that remind us of the death of Jesus Christ.

The bread represents His body given for us. Why bread?

This was the unleavened bread which the Jews used at the celebration of the Passover, made into thin cakes, easily broken and distributed.

Christ is teaching his disciples at The Last Supper that just as this bread is to your bodily health, so My body is to your spiritual health.

Christ declares, “This broken bread shows the manner in which my body will be broken.” It is not meant that his body would be literally broken as the bread was, but that the bread would be a significant emblem or symbol to recall to their remembrance his sufferings.

Our Lord pointed to the broken bread, or laid his hands on it, as if he had said, "Lo, my body! or, Behold my body! that which represents my broken body to you."

This could not be intended to mean, that that bread was literally his body. It was not. His body was then before them living. And there is no greater absurdity than to imagine his living body there changed at once to death, and then the bread to be changed into that dead body, and all the while the living body of Jesus was before them.

The bread was chosen by our Redeemer as a symbol of his death for our sins.

Furthermore, the cup represents His blood given for us.

We read in verse 25, *After the same manner*. In like manner; likewise. With the same circumstances, and designs. The purpose was the same.

The cup of wine which they used at the feast of the Passover was called the cup of Hallel, or praise, because they commenced then repeating the psalms with which they closed the Passover.

The Testament in my blood. The New Covenant was ratified by the blood of Jesus Christ. "Not by the blood of goats and calves" (Heb 9:1).

The blood of Christ covers our sins. When God sees the blood of His Son applied to our hearts, He passes over us in judgment. The blood saves us from destruction.

Therefore, reflecting on the death of Christ keeps us from profaning the Lord's Supper.

2. We should reflect upon his return (Read verse 26b) – proclaim...until He comes

Till he come. Till he return to judge the world.

This demonstrates

(1.) that it was the steady belief of the early church that the Lord Jesus would return to judge the world.

(2.) that it was designed that this ordinance should be perpetuated, and observed to the end of time.

In every generation, therefore, and in every place where there are Christians, it is to be observed, until the Son of God shall return; and the necessity of its observance shall cease only when the whole body of the redeemed shall be permitted to see their Lord, and there shall be no need of those emblems to remind them of him, for all shall see him as he is.

The Lord's Table reminds us that Jesus Christ is the blessed hope of the church.

When we come to gather for the Lord's Supper we are to remember not only that Christ died for us, but also we are to remember He rose again for us, and one day will return for His people.

I Corinthians. 15:4 – He was buried and that He rose again the 3rd day. I Tim. 1:1 - ...the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope. Titus 2:13 – looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

We are to look for, hope for, and prepare for His return.

A lot of people are running around as if Christ's return is some folk tale. The Scripture declares, "Wake up! Look up! Your redemption draws near."

We are in the last days and that is a fact. Just look around.

Therefore, reflecting on the return of the Lord will keep us from profaning the Lord's Table.

3. We should reflect upon our own hearts (Read vs. 27-28, 31-32 – but let a man examine himself (vs. 28a); for if we would judge ourselves (vs. 31a)

examine--Greek, "prove" or "test" his own state of mind in respect to Christ's death, and his capability of "discerning the Lord's body

Vs. 27 – unworthy = Paul is not telling us that we have to be worthy (none are). He is simply telling us not to take of the Lord's Supper in an "unworthy manner".

Unworthily. Perhaps there is no expression in the Bible that has given more trouble to weak and feeble Christians than this.

The excuse is, "I am unworthy to partake of this holy ordinance. I shall only expose myself to condemnation. I must therefore wait until I become more worthy, and better prepared to celebrate it."

Again Albert Barnes writes, "It is important, therefore, that there should be a correct understanding of this passage. Most persons interpret it as if it were unworthy, and not unworthily; and seem to suppose that it refers to their personal qualifications, to their unfitness to partake of it, rather than to the manner in which it is done."

It is to be remembered, therefore, that the word here used is an adverb, and not an adjective, and has reference to the manner of observing the ordinance, and not to their personal qualifications or fitness.

It is true that in ourselves we are all unworthy of an approach to the table of the Lord; unworthy to be regarded as his followers; unworthy of a title to everlasting life: but it does not follow that we may not partake of this ordinance in a worthy, i.e., a proper manner, with a deep sense of our sinfulness, our need of a Savior, and with some just views of the Lord Jesus as our Redeemer.

Whatever may be our consciousness of personal unworthiness and unfitness--and that consciousness cannot be too deep--yet we may have such love to Christ, and such a desire to be saved by him, and such a sense of his worthiness, as to make it proper for us to approach and partake of this ordinance. The term unworthily means, properly, in an unworthy or improper MANNER; in a manner unsuitable to the purposes for which it was designed or instituted.”

When we partake of the Lord’s Supper we are to:

Deal seriously with sin

We can’t partake of the Lord’s Supper with unconfessed sin in our lives.

Deal with broken relationships

We ought not to partake of the Lord’s Supper if we are at odds with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

If there should be and is an opportunity for healing, it is at the time of SELF REFLECTION prior to taking of the Lord’s Supper.

I John 2:11 - ...he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Therefore, reflecting on our hearts keeps us from profaning the Lord's Table.

In closing, the church in Corinth was guilty of profaning the Lord's Table. They lost sight of the death of Christ, the return of Christ, and self-examination. May the Lord help us to glorify Christ by keeping holy the Lord's Table. Let us pray.